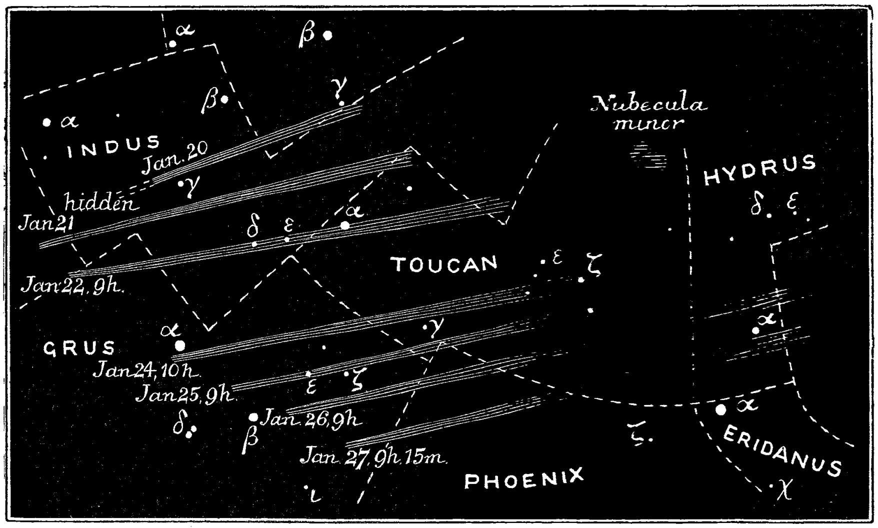
1887MNRAS..47..305T

Observations of Comet 1887 *a, made at the Observatory, Adelaide.* By Charles Todd.

(*Extracts from letters to the Astronomer Royal.*)

A few words about the new comet which has suddenly burst into view in the S.W. I sent you a telegram through Mr. Hesse on Friday, the 21st, which I hope you received, and I now enclose a rough sketch-map showing its positions on Jan. 20th to Jan. 27th. It was first seen on the 19th, but at the Observatory, by myself, not till the 20th, shortly before 9 P.M. The head of the comet was then hid by the mists of the horizon, but the tail passed nearly midway between α *Gruis* and α *Pavonis*, or over γ *Indi*, extending to and a little to the right of γ *Pavonis*.



On the 21st it was better seen and the head of the comet was close to a small star, or roughly (at 9 P.M.) R.A. $21^h\ 5^m$, Decl. 42° 34′. The tail of the comet, as measured round the horizon, had sensibly moved to the north or towards α *Gruis*; it passed a little to the right of γ *Indi*, and to the left of α and δ *Toucani*, and could be traced a little higher in the direction of β *Hydri*. On the 22nd, at $8^h\ 30^m$, the position of the head of the comet was roughly R.A. $21^h\ 20^m\ 30^s$, Decl. 44° 17′. The comet has a long narrow tail of about 30°, but no well-defined nucleus, resembling, in fact, very closely in appearance the comet of Feb. 1880, which during its short season of visibility, you will remember, occupied the same part of the sky, and came into view equally suddenly. I will follow it up on every clear night and advise you again. In the meantime this will be useful in comparing with observations made elsewhere, and may, perhaps, be of some use in getting a rough orbit.

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The following are the only positions of the comet I was able to secure before the Moon shut it out. Although a conspicuous object, about as bright at first as the Magellan clouds, it became rapidly fainter, and at no time was there any defined nucleus* or condensation about the head. It was simply a narrow nebulous streak of about 30° long, and although with the naked eye, or with an ordinary field-glass, the position of the head of the comet could be fairly determined, yet seen through the Equatorial the head was so diffused and died away so gradually that it was quite impossible to say where it was. The positions I give are consequently mere rough approximations obtained by the Equatorial, checked by the naked eye.

On the 24th, at 9 P.M., the head of the comet was partly over and a little to the right of *α Gruis*, which star appeared as a bright stellar nucleus.

On the 20th the head was in the midst of the group τ^1, τ^2, τ^3 *Gruis*, the tail passing between *h*2 and 58, and over *ι Toucani* and to the left of *α Hydri*.

On the 27th the head of the comet, a very diffused nebulous mass, appeared to be cut off by a wide break or rift, from the tail, and higher up there was another narrow break in the continuity of the tail. Both of these breaks might be attributable to small clouds, but we could see faint stars through the breach which seemed to forbid such a supposition :

		R.A.		Dec.		
	h	h	m	°	′	
Jan. 21	9	21	5	−42	34	
22	9	21	21	44	17	
25	9¼	22	22	48	18	
26	9·40	22	47	49	14	
27	9·15	23	9	49	39	guess work

I shall be curious to know how these agree with, perhaps better, positions obtained elsewhere. I send them hoping they may at least be useful in identifying the comet which I am disposed to regard as a fragment of some previous visitor.

The Moon and Aldebaran, 1887, *March* 2, 5^h 45^m *to* 6^h 0^m *G.M.T.*, *as seen at the Radcliffe Observatory, Oxford.* By E. J. Stone, M.A., F.R.S.

The occultation of *Aldebaran* by the Moon predicted to take place on 1887, March 2, was carefully looked for at the Radcliffe Observatory, but though an extraordinarily near appulse took place there was no occultation at Oxford. The overlapping of

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* A nucleus was observed by Mr. Eddie of Grahamstown, on Jan. 24, 25, and 26.—Ed.

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